

FileMaster does it the hard way

If you depend on your computer the way I do, you've probably got enough files stored on just your hard disk to fill a warehouse. And at this point, the cryptic little file names you've given this material aren't much help in locating what you need, especially if the file's been out of use for a while.

I've run across two kinds of products that can help. One searches the contents of your files for a particular character string. The other simply allows you to add more descriptive file names or notes to your list of documents.

My favorite in the first category is a program called GOfer, which I reviewed several weeks ago. But this approach is overkill for those who just need longer file names or notes to jog their memories.

The second approach is for them. And two programs fit the bill.

The first — FileMaster — was made specifically to address the problem, while the other — Smart



Hillel Segal

Notes — wasn't. Ironically, I like SmartNotes better for solving this problem. But first, here's more about each one:

■ FileMaster is available for \$49.95 from Transec Systems Inc., 220 Congress Park Drive, Delray Beach, Fla. 33445, (305) 276-1500. It is a memory-resident program that does just what its name says. It's the grandson of PCEasy, the original extended file name program, which is still available from Transec. PCEasy, though, requires more knowledge of DOS commands, so it's designed more for the technical user.

FileMaster lets you identify files with longer, more descriptive names on a full screen list that

pops up when you press a hot key, usually the Alt, Ctrl and Shift keys held down together.

With a slew of files that have descriptive names, FileMaster allows you to run operations on your files, index and categorize them, and thus find the one you want quickly.

But that's it. Although Transec has made some great strides in revising both PCEasy and FileMaster to make them easier to use since it introduced the first program several years ago, the new versions are still not as easy to use as SmartNotes. I found it very difficult to install and cumbersome to use with WordPerfect, even though special WordPerfect procedures are provided.

The effort just isn't worth it when compared with SmartNotes, the original and ultimate computerized sticky-note software. Available from Personics Corp., 2352 Main St., Concord, Mass. 01742, (617) 897-1575, for \$79.95, SmartNotes is one of my all-time favorite

programs.

Unlike FileMaster, you can use SmartNotes to attach different sizes and different colors of electronic "sticky" notes to your file directories, highlighting your most important files. Or, you can attach notes to each file in a directory, then call up the file of notes and identify the exact document you're looking for. The notes can be as short as a single line.

■ The bottom line: While FileMaster is certainly a nifty program for giving files longer names, I found its application pretty one-dimensional, especially compared with the more versatile SmartNotes. SmartNotes is certainly worth the extra \$30 for the additional features and ease of use.

Hillel Segal's column includes evaluations of gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.